
PLAIN AND AFFECTIONATE
DISCOURSES
ON THE
SACRAMENT
OF THE
LORD'S SUPPER.

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DISCOURSES

ON THE

DEACONATE

OF THE

CHURCH



BY

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TO THE WORTHY INHABITANTS
OF THE
PARISH OF ST. BOTOLPH BISHOPSGATE,
IN THE CITY OF LONDON,
THESE DISCOURSES,
PRINTED FOR THEIR USE,
ARE INSCRIBED BY
THEIR FAITHFUL HUMBLE SERVANT,
THE AUTHOR.



DISCOURSE I.

LUKE xxii, 19.

THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME.

IT is hardly possible to conceive any thing more plain and intelligible than the account, which three of the Evangelists have given us, of the Institution of the Lord's Supper. Wherefore Saint John, who being the last writer of the Apostles is therefore supposed to be the most accurate, does nevertheless take no notice of this institution, is very obvious. His Gospel was not intended for a narrative of the life and actions of Christ, but only for an appendix to the history which had been written before by the other Evangelists, and to supply what they had omitted; he wrote it late in life, after the Apostles and Disciples of Christ had spread the Gospel far and near, and this holy institution had universally been taught and received therewith. The obligation was sufficiently evident from the words themselves, "take, eat; drink ye all of this; this do in remembrance of Me." Now whether this was to be done by them once only, or oftener; and whether by the disciples only during their lives, or by all christians afterwards in every successive age of the church; is not indeed certain merely from the force of the words themselves: but what Saint Paul adds puts the matter out of all doubt, that the institution of this Sacrament was intended not only for that age, but for all christians, and for all ages of the church; "for as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew forth the Lord's death till he come," that is, until the time of his second coming, which will be at the end of the world. And the same obligation will more fully appear, if we advert to the

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usage

usage of the primitive christians and of all ages of the church to this time ; for the sense or meaning of any law or institution is best understood from the general practice which follows immediately thereupon.

The first converts to christianity communicated in this holy sacrament with all humility and submission to the plain and express will and authority of our Lord ; and not only this general observance of the duty is remarkable, but the constancy also and frequency of the performance ; for “ they continued stedfastly in the Apostles doctrine and fellowship, and were daily in the temple breaking bread with one accord.” Acts ii, 42. The holy injunction was never considered as confined to the age of the Apostles ; and christians have always looked upon it as a duty, and generally performed it with a reverential obedience ; except some modern sectaries, who pretend to have a light within them, and born with them too, sufficient to conduct them to salvation. And I am desirous, that ye should be carefully provided with this argument against that vain conceit of enthusiasm, which seems to be getting ground again among us, concerning the gift and dispensation of the Holy Ghost ; when all human teaching shall cease, and all external ordinances and institutions, as being of no further use in religion, shall vanish ; vain, I say, and groundless in itself, as well as destructive in its consequence of our faith in the hope of eternal life, as often as we partake of this Sacrament.

Suitable likewise to the dignity and importance of the Institution is the account which Saint Paul gives, in the first instance of a careless inattention and disobedience thereto ; that it was enforced distinctly by an immediate revelation made to him by the Lord himself : which, as it added singular weight and authority to a plain and easy injunction, made his reproof of his new converts for a manifest neglect and contempt thereof peculiarly powerful and effectual. Under these circumstances it was needful to give it all the importance that he possibly could. To the Corinthians, who had so far forgot their christian duty as to run into the most scandalous excesses of riot

riot and uncharitableness, it was not enough to write of gratitude and benevolence and all those amiable principles, upon which the divine author had rested this institution, and moreover to represent it as an infallible mark or badge of the christian profession, the testimony of unity, and the very bond of peace, as well as a standing memorial of the death of Christ; the Apostle therefore has recourse to the usual address of orators, in applying to their fears: he tells them, "whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; he eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not considering the Lord's body."

1 Cor. xi.

If the Corinthians had attended to those solemn words, which so plainly and with so much authority express the nature, end, and design of this holy sacrament, they could not have committed an error in an essential point, amounting to an open and declared contempt of that admonition and precept, which in express words was a part, and a principal part too, of the institution itself. It was not possible that they should, at the very time of celebrating this holy rite, have despised their poor brethren, not allowing them to partake equally in their religious festivals, if they had considered, that the action which they were then performing was the solemn shewing forth the Lord's death, an holy profession of their belief in a crucified Saviour, a public declaration of their hope of salvation only through the merits of his death, who died equally for the poor and the rich, for the honourable and the dishonourable. They could not have behaved themselves thus carelessly and unsuitably to the solemnity, if they had attended to that plain injunction, "Do this in remembrance of Me."

In like manner, is it possible for a true member of the church of Christ to approach the Lord's table without a reverential awe upon his mind, and a most earnest desire to strengthen his faith in God, to express his gratitude to his Saviour, to obtain pardon of his past sins through the merits of his blood who loved us and gave himself for us.

and to make solemn resolutions of perfecting his repentance and renewing his obedience towards God, that the holiness of his life be answerable to the obligation which this holy communion lays upon him? Is it possible, that a pious contemplation upon the wonderful love of God, the Supreme Lord and Father of all, in sending freely into the world His own Son to become a sacrifice and propitiation for sin; or that an holy and devout meditation on the death of Christ; which we solemnly commemorate in the Lord's supper, in submitting willingly to the good pleasure of His Father, should fail to dispose them who partake thereof to mutual love and charity? Will not the remembrance of these things be a mighty endearment of this institution to all who call themselves Christians? that it was the earnest request, the positive command of our Blessed Saviour, to commemorate His death in the manner which He has prescribed; and that this holy rite was instituted at the time when he was going to lay down His life for the sins of men, and by His death to procure for them everlasting life; that it is moreover the most proper and distinguishing act of divine worship; that by our participation at the Lord's table we are received into the divine grace and favour; that our faith in Christ is thereby increased; our hope and trust in Him strengthened; and our charity towards our brethren enlarged, in proportion to the ardency of gratitude and devotion, wherewith we commemorate that stupendous instance of divine love. Whatsoever we are commanded to do in remembrance of Christ, whatsoever we do in remembrance of Christ, must needs be worthy of Christ. It would most highly become us to submit with all humility to the will and authority of our blessed Lord and Master, though we could not understand so much of the reasonableness and utility of the institution, as we do; though we could not perceive distinctly the benefits that we receive thereby; and were not able to apprehend the particular grounds of its fitness. And if the injunction itself be so clear and express, how evident the obligation to obey a precept so reasonable, so easy, so full of blessings and benefits to the faithful

faithful observers of it! Consider it as the earnest request of our best friend and benefactor, addressed to the most amiable principles of human nature, nothing can be more interesting than the tenderness with which He desires to cherish the remembrance of Himself by those emblems of the most cruel and melancholy sufferings, which He was just entering upon: Consider it moreover as the perpetual ordinance and the divine command of our dying Saviour, nothing can be more authoritative than this positive institution. It is the indispensable duty of every one who calls himself a Christian, to do this in remembrance of Christ.

Remembrance implies in its most obvious meaning a serious attention. Do they remember their Creator and Redeemer, who frequent the public worship not at all, or else in a careless and reluctant manner; and who are still more faulty and irregular in their devotions at the Lord's table? Young persons are unmindful of the solemnity of the dying request and command, call it which you will, of our blessed Saviour, because it does not suit their gay and volatile dispositions; or it may be, they are offended at the gloominess and moroseness of some, who are most punctual in the observance of it—* Some, to whom I am now speaking, have lately taken upon themselves those engagements, which their godfathers and godmothers entered into for them at their baptism; let them be admonished to think seriously thereupon, and to complete those engagements by being admitted to the holy communion, the most solemn act whereby they can profess their faith in Christ and obedience to his gospel—Many, who are of an indolent temper, have at the same time so much goodness of heart, that one would wish to bring them over to the observance of an institution, which would be of singular advantage to their natural dispositions. Others on the contrary are so unmindful of the time and occasion when our

* These Discourses were delivered soon after a Confirmation in 1774.

Saviour instituted this rite, which are necessary to be attended to in order to understand it rightly, that they make it the instrument of bigotry and the very power of uncharitableness ; they will not communicate for the world with any who are not of their own sect and persuasion ; or they come to the Lord's table as they happen to be in humour with their brethren. — Are such the peculiar disciples of the meek and merciful Jesus ? who instituted this holy ordinance with the utmost complacency and sweetness of disposition, when there sat with him at the table a wretch who, he knew, meditated to betray him. — We must have a very extraordinary degree of charity to suppose them to be christians, at the same time that they neglect this benign and gracious memento of our blessed Saviour, given under such circumstances as cannot but affect every devout and grateful heart, and which is itself the likeliest means in the world, if any have cause of uneasiness with any, to dispose them to forgiveness and benevolence.

“ Do this in remembrance of Me ” is moreover the weightiest and most comprehensive motive to the practice of every branch of our christian duty. Men are usually as unapt to remember, as they are at first slow to apprehend things of a spiritual nature. God has therefore been pleased to use the same means in keeping up spiritual notions in our minds, as in conveying them thither, by the help of continued outward and sensible signs. || The death of Christ being inestimably the greatest blessing that was ever conferred upon the sons of men, it very well deserved to be perpetually kept in mind with the highest veneration, and commemorated with the greatest thankfulness. Our Saviour therefore instituted such symbols or representations of what he did and suffered for us, as might best conduce to the spiritual ends which he designed in this sacrament : such as might be most expressive of an humble acknowledgment of the only ground of our hope and pardon in his death ; a public declaration to the world of our faith in him, and an earnest endeavour to continue down the memory of his love to all generations ; —

nerations; the highest expression of joy and gratitude towards God, for his unspeakable mercy in sending his Son into the world for the redemption of mankind; a confirmation of our covenant with God; a thankful acceptance of those conditions of pardon which he has offered to us, and a renewal of our obligations to obey Him; a profession of our communion one with another, and an avowal of our mutual agreement and fellowship in commemorating our common Saviour. All this is implied in the remembrance of Christ, as often as we partake of the sacrament of his body and blood. It is moreover an earnest meditation upon the death and passion of our blessed Lord, with a due apprehension of its great concern and importance to our spiritual and eternal interests, which will always have an effectual influence upon our lives and actions. It shews forth the devout and religious affections of the mind in such outward acts, as are in their own nature most apt to excite, as well as to express them.

Yet to them, who having a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ with a thankful remembrance of his death, do truly and sincerely repent, and are stedfastly purposed to lead a new life and be in charity with all men, even to such as are christians indeed, the sacrament of the Lord's supper is not properly an expiation of sin; it is only a thankful remembrance of that great atonement, by which our repentance is made acceptable. Nor can religion be capable of greater corruption, superstition itself cannot be of more evil and pernicious consequence, the subtleties of controversy which make the world neither wiser nor better were never worse applied, than when that ordinance is recommended as an easy method of obtaining perpetual pardon of repeated transgressions, which in reality was intended to remind us continually, that the pardon of sin could not at all be obtained but by the shedding of the precious blood of the Son of God.

When the blood of Christ is styled in the prophetic language of Zechariah (xiii. 1.) "a fountain opened for sin and uncleannets" the meaning is, as St. Paul explains it,
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for the forgiveness of sins past, not for our encouragement to continue therein. We must therefore with firm and effectual resolutions of future obedience offer and present ourselves, our souls and bodies, a reasonable, holy and lively sacrifice unto God, as often as we commemorate that great sacrifice which was once offered for us in the death of his Son. If any be a blasphemer of God, an hinderer or slanderer of his word, an adulterer, or in malice, envy, or any other grievous crime, let him acknowledge his unworthiness, and cry mightily unto Him that is able to save, if perhaps the wickedness of his past life may be forgiven him; or else come not to that holy table. But let not the doubting, tho' sincere penitent, neglect to receive at all, in order to avoid the danger of receiving unworthily; let him not omit the performance of so sacred an action, under the scrupulous notion of the want of due preparation, of which after all there is no other certain and infallible mark than the consequent effect. Much more let not pious persons of a melancholy turn of mind be brought into great fear, even "where no fear is": seeing, they constantly endeavour to obey the commandments of God and to live in the habitual practice of virtue and religion, let them not be discouraged from this sacrament by the unwary discourse of some, upon the misapplication of several texts of scripture; whence have arisen such doubts and misgivings as utterly deter many from the use of it, and in a great measure impress almost the generality of Christians with a religious, I had almost said an irreligious, diffidence and terror, to the great prejudice and danger of their souls, the visible abatement of piety, by the gross neglect of so excellent a means of growth and improvement therein, and the mighty scandal of our holy religion by the general disuse of so plain and solemn an institution of our blessed Lord and Saviour.

It is not a matter of intricate enquiry, wherein that due preparation consists, beyond which are many perplexing difficulties, full of doubts and scruples and endless superstition. Let this be seriously and uniformly attended to,
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that it depends not on any secret virtue annexed to the external action, but entirely on the right disposition and worthy qualification of a pious and devout mind. To which I will add the Exhortation of the Apostle, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know yet not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, (or as it is elsewhere expressed, the Spirit of Christ dwelleth in you) except ye be repro-bates? or are ye so little acquainted with yourselves, as not to know whether Christ be in you?" Every man's own conscience is the best expositor of the grace of God. But because the minds of well disposed christians are always desirous to be especially instructed in these particulars, hence it becomes the indispensable duty of the ministers of the gospel frequently and diligently to explain to the people committed to their charge the general nature, end and design of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the particular obligations which christians are under to receive it, the benefits of receiving it worthily, the preparations necessary thereto, together with the groundlessness and vanity of most of those reasons, which men usually allege for their abstaining from the holy communion, under the pretence of want of due preparation: not considering, that they in the parable who refused to come to the marriage-feast of the King's son were at least as faulty as the other, who came without a wedding-garment; nor attending to the consequence, that as the latter met with severe punishment for an act of disrespect, so the former were destroyed for their disobedience.

These things, ye will bear me witness, I have oftentimes largely insisted upon; yet I am desirous of adding something more, upon the great confidence that I have in many, which may not only instruct those among you who are yet unedified, but remind you all of the obligation which christianity lays upon us, to receive the holy communion in that plain, intelligible manner wherein it was offered to the world; without ascribing to it powers which are no where promised, and which instead of strengthening do in reality weaken the obligations to

true piety and goodness, by giving false hopes that sins unrepented of are cancelled by the observance of this one institution; or else by surrounding it with such groundless terrors, as prevent many weak though well disposed persons from frequenting this holy rite, and really make them guilty of disobedience to a positive command of Christ. And I cannot perform this service better, than by explaining to you the Order for the administration of the Lord's Supper; which is the best guide and assistant to the pious communicant, to raise devout affections at the time of receiving, and to confirm his holy purposes afterwards. And be ye all assured of this, which many among you have experienced, that the effect of a constant use of it is, to form the soul into holy thoughts and desires, and to beget habits of devotion; to raise the penitent heart from dejection by the frequent mention of God's mercies; to nourish the hope, to increase the faith, and elevate the joy of the devout christian. May the Lord fulfil all His declarations and promises, and pardon all our weaknesses and imperfections !

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE II.

* **T**HE manuals of devotion, which are commonly made use of as helps or guides to the holy communicant, do for the most part breath the spirit of enthusiasm more than of true piety. They are generally weak performances, calculated rather to raise an enflamed ecstatic devotion, than to compose the mind to the religious exercise of prayer and thanksgiving. In some points they do not sufficiently obviate, in others they lead the unwary into many hurtful errors; instead of elucidating, they obscure the true nature, end and design of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The great doctrines of faith and repentance are more peculiarly to be attended to, when we celebrate this sacrament, which was instituted for a solemn and standing memorial of Christ. For repentance respects God, who is the party offended, and to whom we hope to be reconciled; and faith refers to the Lord Jesus Christ, as its chief object. What then can be more proper when we receive this sacrament, than the renewal of our repentance? which implies a conviction that we have done something evil and sinful, contrary to the law we are under and those obligations of duty and gratitude that lie upon us; whereby God is highly provoked and incensed against us, and we are in danger of His wrath and the sad effects of the divine displeasure, whence arises sorrow and contrition: and herein the faith of the gospel is necessary to make our repentance effectual; for this is the method of God's grace, not to pardon sin without satisfaction to His offended justice, and Jesus Christ hath made satisfaction for sin by the merit of his sufferings: and this faith doth more particularly respect the death of Christ, and is therefore called "faith in his blood," because that is more especially the object of our faith;

* Which depressing & downcasting Judgment of Damnation, defeats their purpose, because the Obstacles proven in the way of receiving worthily are so numerous and almost insurmountable that, but few, entertaining those unchristian notions would dare to Communicate - Our Saviour's Exposition is Simply "Take eat. Do this in remembrance of me"

faith ; as it was a seal of the truth of his doctrines, and also a confirmation of all the blessings and benefits of the new covenant.

If then the ordinance itself has been exposed to the entire neglect and contempt of some, who have taken up many crude notions about it, without ever looking into the new testament ; or who distinguish perhaps between a positive institution and a moral law, not considering that the former, at the instant that it is enacted by a proper authority, is as obligatory upon those to whom it is given as the latter—if instead of attending with seriousness and understanding to the methods of the divine grace for the salvation of sinners, to the true nature and conditions of the covenant between God and us, and to the plain scripture-doctrine how a sinner is sanctified and obtains pardon of his sins, the people must be gratified with sublime notions and unintelligible mysteries—if the ministers of God's word, instead of preaching what men may understand and what they ought to believe and practise, in an unaffected and convincing manner, are conversant rather in deep points of divinity, and teach for doctrines of the gospel many crude conceptions of men ; or if writers of warm imaginations, instead of explaining judiciously the lofty figures of scripture-language, heighten them far beyond all possible meaning ; if, for instance, they call the sacrament of the Lord's Supper “ an unbloody sacrifice ” in some real and literal sense, though the ancient writers use the word “ sacrifice ” in the metaphorical sense only, in imitation of the figurative and sublime expression of St. Paul, who styles the christian church “ The true circumcision ; ” and notwithstanding as “ without blood there can be no remission ” so properly without blood there can be no sacrifice—if, which is more unscriptural, they call this sacrament “ a feast upon the sacrifice ”, though under the law the priest did not feast upon the sin-offering—while allusions to the positive institutions of the mosaic dispensation are carried to fanciful and extravagant length—if some new unintelligible account of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper be substituted for the instruction

tion of christians, instead of a plain and scriptural one—or on the other hand, if the design of the Lord's Supper has been represented as a remembrance of our obligations to Jesus in general, without any special reference to His death and passion, as an atonement for the sins of the whole world—if instead of a commemoration of that all-sufficient sacrifice, which was once offered for an eternal expiation, it has been deemed, like baptism, a rite appointed for the remission of sins ; which is the same thing as to imagine, that the Lord's Supper, which is to be repeated perpetually, has the same promise annexed to it, as has that other sacrament which is to be administered but once ; and is an encouragement to continue in sin, that the grace of forgiveness likewise may be perpetually repeated—if moreover in the administration of the Lord's Supper the custom of some is, to pronounce only the initial words “ the body of our Lord Jesus Christ ” and “ the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ ”, leaving out all that follow ; whence we may fairly presume, that they are not much averse to the doctrine of the council of Trent concerning the true body of Jesus Christ and His true blood under the species of bread and wine, which next to that of infallibility is of all their tenets the most valued by the members of the church of Rome, and is of itself the most important, being the main part of their worship and the chief object of all their devotions—on all these accounts, great reason there is to take your prayer books in your hands, and say, we want no other guide or assistant, than this grave, decent, sensible, and devout Order for the administration of this holy sacrament. Therein we shall learn its true nature, end and design, which neither are nor possibly can be taught us from the words of the institution considered by themselves. For it contains the whole scripture-doctrine of the office and character of Christ ; it represents to us our blessed Saviour as a sacrifice, atonement and propitiation of our sins ; and if the remembrance of Him is essential to the sacrament, the remembrance and acknowledgment of Him as the sacrifice, atonement and propitiation of our sins,

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is essential to the sacrament likewise. It moreover directs and confines the attention to all that is delivered concerning the purpose of this holy institution by the divine Author himself, and the due performance of this solemn service by those, who alone had authority to declare the nature of it; neither on the one hand diminishing, nor on the other augmenting what is declared by them to belong thereto.

To it therefore I refer you; premising only, that the peculiar care of our Church is observable in this as well as its other offices, to prepare the parties concerned to perform their duties with understanding, and to instruct as well as to assist them in the performance. And first of all, the Rubricks before the communion service offer themselves to your notice. The principal design of the first of them is, that the Minister, by knowing at least some time before the names of all that intend to be partakers of the holy communion, may be able to inform himself of their fitness; so that if there be any among them not duly qualified, he may persuade them to abstain of their own accord; or if they obstinately offer themselves, absolutely reject them. For the second and third Rubricks give an absolute power to the church to repel scandalous offenders, that is, such notorious evil livers by whom the congregation is offended, as also those amongst whom he perceiveth malice and hatred to reign; and the Ordinary shall proceed against the offending person according to the canon. Not that any unworthiness except the communicant's own, can possibly endanger him or prevent his receiving benefit. Doubtless it is very desirable, that all our religious assemblies were made up of such persons as would do honour to our holy profession; and in an especial manner, it would be more satisfactory as well as more edifying, to come to the Lord's table in company with such only as are qualified for a place at it. Good reason there may be, that they who are unqualified should, when they properly can, be restrained from it; but such as are worthy have neither direction, nor permission, to stay away, because others come who are unworthy; nay, should even the stewards
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and dispensers of God's mysteries, who ought not with impure hands to offer sacrifice to Him whose eyes abhor iniquity, be themselves unholy persons, let no man therefore be tempted to despise the offering of the Lord, for that is holy still : " the promises of all God's ordinances are in Christ Jesus yea and amen, unto the glory of God by us", 2 Cor. i. 20 ; the apostle's meaning is evident, that they are sure, infallible, and entirely to be depended upon, by as many as worship him in spirit and in truth.

Hence arises a question, not indeed without some difficulty ; and which I will briefly mention, because the solution of it will be a sufficient answer to many other cases, productive of much offence to the pious communicant. Since all persons before they are admitted to any office are obliged to receive the sacrament, as a qualification ; with what propriety and effect it is needless to say ; is the Minister obliged to admit every such person as offers ? I think, it is most highly expedient so to do : for though besides notoriously bad livers, there are other persons disabled by the laws of the Church from communicating, such as schismatics, unbaptized, and excommunicated persons ; such too as have not been confirmed, when they had it in their power to apply for that purpose ; and lastly, all strangers from other parishes, whom the Minister is required for very good reasons to forbid and to remit home to their own parishes, there to receive the communion with the rest of their neighbours ; yet with respect to all of them there is a reserve in cases of necessity, and in some of convenience too. Such a large discretionary power as is implied in the refusal might be hurtful to a body of men, who are most obnoxious to the injuries and provocations of their wicked and designing neighbours, in these days of universal licentiousness. What a reproach would it be to them to resemble in any sort the former times, when the rigour and sourness of ministers denied the holy sacrament to their parishioners, unless upon such conditions and in such manner as they could not with a good conscience comply with ? It is not our business to indulge spleen and ill-nature by a rigid severity, but to endeavour

deavour by an exemplary candour and benevolence to reclaim the profane and irreligious. In this method we shall be sure to do our duty, whereas in the way of discipline and correction we may chance to be wrong. Instead of keeping many at a distance, we may with more ease and satisfaction invite them to draw nearer ; and if any be refractory, such is the justice of the world, and of which we are more confident, such is the justice of God, that all infamy and punishment will fall upon themselves. And besides that it is impossible but that tares will be mixed with the wheat, to attempt to root them up may often be more hurtful than to let both grow together until the harvest.

The fourth Rubrick has respect to the conveniency of this divine service, agreeably to the direction of the Apostle, 1 Cor. xiv. 40. " Let all things be done decently and in order." To exclude all outward acts of worship from true religion, and to place religion almost wholly in them, are both wrong. Our minds must be filled with a due reverence towards God, and that pious disposition must shew forth itself in proper acts of external worship. And here it is proper to observe, that in the first and purest ages of christianity, the holy eucharist was joined always to the public and common prayers of the congregation ; wherein was followed the practice of the apostolic times, for we read that " all that believed continued daily with one accord in the temple, breaking bread from house to house ;" Acts ii. 4, 6. " in the house" the words should be translated, that is, in the place of their religious assemblies. Our church too, in conformity to those and the subsequent times, has appointed a great part of this office to be used on all Sundays and holydays, and orders the priest to say it at the communion table, the place where all the prayers of the church were used to be said : because that is the proper place, wherein to commemorate Jesus our only Mediator, through whom all our prayers are accepted ; and moreover this part of the liturgy, consisting chiefly in words of praise and thanksgiving, and serving to singular good
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purposes even when there is no communion administered, being devised at the first for that purpose, is very properly read at the Lord's table. If, in token of the greater reverence, it be the custom of some to bow thereto, calling it the altar, since no man is constrained to use this ceremony, there is no good reason why any should be offended.

To proceed : can there be a fitter beginning to this sacred office, which has so peculiarly Christ for its author, than that divine prayer which owes its origin likewise to Him? And as the people were commanded to purify themselves before the first publication of the Law (Exodus xix. 14.) is it not likewise most fitting, that christians should pray to God to cleanse the thoughts of their hearts by the inspiration, even the gracious influence and operation of His Holy Spirit, at the time when the Minister is to rehearse distinctly the divine precepts of the moral law? which by baptism we were once admitted into a solemn obligation to obey, as by the other sacrament of the Lord's Supper we continually renew and confirm that obligation. Let me entreat all that hear me, to consider well the true spirit of religion in this part of the office ; which conveys a most momentous truth, that whatever else in preference to keeping the commandments of God in the course of a virtuous and good life, goes among vain men under the name and character of religion, and is weakly and superstitiously valued or esteemed as such, is all of it error and delusion. The words which God spake, require a solemnity of voice and manner suitable to the delivery of the law. The Minister pronounces in the name of God Himself a summary of moral duties, on the performance of which man's eternal happiness depends. With what reverence and awful silence ought the people to hear and receive God's commandments, and at the end of each with what fervency and devotion to implore the divine mercy, to incline their hearts to keep every part thereof? begging of God " sufficient grace" 2 Cor. xii. 19, and earnestly entreating Him in the words of that excellent petition, " Lord, have mercy upon us, and write all
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these Thy laws in our hearts, we beseech Thee :” remembering always that most emphatical and affectionate exclamation, “ Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life.” Rev. xxii. 14. Oh that these words were graven in their hearts, who think their faith is sufficient to save them, though it hath not works !

The prayers that follow are very properly inserted where they stand, that there may be no interruption in the communion service ; and there are two, both which tend to the same end, and differ more in form than in substance. It is the exhortation of the Apostle, that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men, for Kings and all that are in authority. And great reason have we to be thus thankful, who are protected thereby in the exercise of that pure reformed religion, which has the fewest positive rites, and lays the least stress upon them ; and moreover wherein those rites which are appointed, have the most direct and immediate tendency to promote real virtue and holiness in the lives of men.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE III.

NEXT after the Collect, Epistle, and Gospel, concerning the antiquity, matter, and suitableness of which I need not enlarge, follows the Nicene Creed ; which was drawn up purposely to condemn the heresies, that had crept very early into the church. And since in this sacrament we renew our baptismal vow, a principal part of which was, that we would believe all the articles of the christian faith, it is very requisite that we should, before we are admitted to the holy communion, declare that we stand firm in the belief of those articles. Not that this or any other creed hath authority of its own equal to the scriptures, but it derives its principal authority from them ; nor is it in the power of man, or any number of men, to lessen or encrease the fundamental articles of the christian faith. But as we have all been “ baptizéd into one body,” and have all “ been made to drink into one spirit,” we must “ endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.” 1 Cor. xii. 13. Eph iv. 3. And as the people are enjoined to stand at the reading of the gospel, which containeth the words of eternal life, the same posture ought in reason to be used when with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Now with regard to the several offices of the Divine Persons in the Trinity, in which regard it is that the scriptures speak of them, there can be no mistake. It is the vanity of men speculating about their metaphysical nature beyond what is written, that has been the occasion of many errors, which the Nicene Creed condemns. For this reason it was originally enjoined, and still continues to be rehearsed by the people before the sacrament ; to shew, that they are free from the heresy of some, who have imagined three co-ordinate Beings, which is the impiety of Polytheism, and directly contradicts that funda-

mental article, the unity of God; and of others, who contended that they are one person only with three modes or denominations, which is the error of Sabellianism, and destroys the personality both of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; but principally of Arius, who affirmed that there was a time, when the Son and the Holy Spirit had no being, and that they were made out of nothing even as the meanest of creatures; and of Socinus, who diminishing yet further the dignity of our Saviour's Person, made Him a mere man, and denied that He had any being before He was born of the Virgin Mary. How then amidst this multiplicity of errors, shall a sincere and unlearned christian conduct himself? Let him hold fast and abide by those collections or summaries, which in scripture-language are called "the form of sound words," "the words of faith," "the principles of the doctrine of Christ," and in the present language of christians, the Creed or Belief; let him be very cautious not to follow vain men, who affect to be wise beyond what is written; and always remember so to understand all phrases of human conception, as to mean neither more, nor less, than is implied in the scripture expressions.

After the Nicene Creed follows a Rubrick of directions, the principal intention of which was to forbid the superstitious observance of holydays in honour of many new saints, whose legends are made up of heaps of frivolous and scandalous vanities, of false and fantastical miracles; many of which have been even with disdain thrown out, the very nests which bred them abhorring them. The peculiar propriety of placing it here is observable from the masses that used to be performed on the saints days; praying that the intercession of some local and favourite saint might make the sacrifice acceptable; that the saint for whose honour these oblations were solemnly made, would by his merits procure them to be accepted; and that the sacrifice might bring to them a greater indulgence, being offered up by the suffrages of the saint. In all which appears the foul degeneracy of the Romish Church both in the doctrine and practice of christianity, and particularly in

in the repetition of Christ's propitiatory sacrifice in the mass.

In the next place, the same Rubrick directs that, if occasion be, notice be given of the communion on some future day. In the early times of christianity, the daily or weekly communions made it known that there were then no solemn assemblies of christians without them ; but now, when the time of communicating is somewhat uncertain, and long omissions make some people ignorant of the opportunity, and others forgetful of the duty and service itself, many of us unwilling, and all more or less indisposed for it, the pious care of the Church is very laudable and thankworthy, in giving warning for the celebration of the holy communion on the Sunday or holyday immediately preceding ; and in providing moreover large instructions and very serious and affectionate exhortations, as well to the impenitent sinner as to the penitent and doubting christian.

The last clause, concerning what things are to be published and what not, was added to prevent the indecent and profane custom, which too much prevails still in country-churches and requires the attention of the Ordinary, of publishing the most frivolous and unbecoming things during the performance of divine service. Perhaps there never was a time when the interposition of the magistrate was more necessary to maintain the honour of religion. In nothing did the piety of our ancestors and their zeal for God's glory so much appear, as in their extreme care to protect the divine worship from the rudeness and temerity of wicked and profane men ; and in nothing is the licentiousness of the present age more conspicuous, than in an avowed disregard and contempt of holy things. It is an ill essay of reverence and godly fear, to behave indecently in the church of God ; and let no man pretend to have any regard for christianity, who will dare to profane its holy ordinances.

In the primitive times sermons were appointed to be used more especially when the Lord's Supper was to be administered ; and it is very suitable, that the minds of
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the people should be devoutly disposed by some pious and practical discourse adapted to the solemnity of the occasion. The Sermon therefore is a part of the communion service ; and for the same reason, in the homilies set forth by authority at the time of the reformation, when a competent number of ministers of sufficient abilities to preach in a publick congregation could not be found, which was a most useful and commendable institution as well to supply the necessary as the casual defect of sermons, one of them contains a plain and instructive discourse (for so the word signifies) concerning the worthy receiving of the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ.

The Sermon or Homily being ended, the Minister, who giveth warning for the celebration of the holy communion, is directed to use one or other of those serious and affectionate exhortations, which are ample forms of the warning itself. It would detain you very long, else I should not think my time and labour ill bestowed, to enlarge upon every part of those excellent compositions. They are admirably fitted to remind them who intend to communicate, of the great dignity and importance of this holy mystery ; and others who neglect to come to the communion, how great injury they do to themselves, and how sore punishment hangeth over their heads for the same. They are moreover so plain and intelligible, that good reading is the best comment upon them ; and the people will very devoutly and earnestly attend to them, inasmuch as the minister cannot fail to pronounce them with a serious gravity and a truly pious and affectionate warmth.

And now follows the exercise of Charity, without which faith would be void and religion vain. Most highly reasonable it is in itself, as well as agreeable to ancient practice, that when we come to partake of the Lord's Supper, we should offer unto God according to our ability for the relief of the distressed ; whence this part of the service is called the Offertory. The Church therefore, in order to stir us up more effectually to the exercise of this important duty, has here selected such sentences of scripture

scripture as contain the most ample instructions, the most authoritative injunctions, and persuasive exhortations thereto.

They are the words of our Saviour Himself, Matt. v. 16. "Let your light so shine before men," the light of your meekness, goodness, and charity, the light of your excellent temper and universal virtue, "that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where the rust and moth doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal;" Matt. vi. 19, 20. that is, be not so solicitous for the perishable things of this world, as for the everlasting glory and happiness of the next.

"Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do unto them: for this is the law and the prophets." Matt. vii. 12. As thou wouldest have no man to be injurious to thee in any thing, be not thou so to any man in any kind; for this is the foundation of all those duties of justice and mercy, which are so much inculcated in the law and the prophets.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord," not every professor of the true religion, not every member of the church of God, "shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matt. vii. 21. That which God requires as a condition, and will accept as a qualification in those who hope for eternal life, is faith in Christ, and a sincere and universal obedience to the precepts of the Gospel. It is not the mere outward profession of the Christian religion, the owning of Christ to be our Lord and Master, and being baptized into His name; it is not the external worship of Him, and acknowledgment of subjection to Him, by prayer and hearing His word and communicating in His holy sacrament, that will be sufficient to gain us ad-
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mission into heaven : there can be no repentance to salvation without obedience to His laws.

The next sentence therefore declares, what is the most eminent fruit and effect of true repentance : it is the making of restitution and satisfaction to them whom we have injured. We are taught that it is not enough to part with what is our own, unless we restore that which is another man's. Though the poor be relieved out of our abundance, where is our justice, charity, and benevolence, in detaining from him whom we have injured that which is his own ?

“ Zacchæus stood forth and said unto the Lord, behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have done any wrong to any man, I restore fourfold.” Luke xix. 8. But what if there be a total disability to make restitution ? for instance, what reparation can be made, in the case of spiritual injuries, to those whom we have at any time drawn into sin and engaged in wicked courses by our influence, or example, or by neglect of duty towards them ? what compensation to the fame and character of our neighbours, which has been hurt by slander, or calumny, or false witness ? It is very possible that the oppressor may not be able out of his ill-gotten estate to make ample satisfaction to all whom he has injured. Remember then that in every violation of God's laws, either by fraud, or violence, or calumny, or in any other way, there is an injury done to God, as well as to man : there must therefore in the first place be repentance towards God : and because without restitution there can be no remission, thy sorrow must be so much the greater, as thy ability to make restitution is less ; which, instead of laying unnecessary burdens upon men's consciences, let me recommend as a serious and important lesson to be injurious to no body ; whereby the difficult duty of restitution will be avoided.

Thus we are instructed in the comprehensive duty of charity. It is well known, that in the primitive times the Clergy had a liberal maintenance out of the devotions of the people. The sentences therefore from the sixth to the

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the tenth inclusively respect them ; and though in general it may be proper to omit the recital of them, since the clergy have a stated and legal maintenance, yet where the local income is insufficient, they have still a right to their share in these offerings. The remaining sentences recommend to our pious consideration the extent of this duty in respect of its object, which is all mankind. The law of charity requires that we should bear an universal good will to all men, and wish the happiness of every individual and pray for it, as sincerely as we wish and pray for our own ; and if we be sincere in our wishes and prayers for the good of others, we shall be so in our endeavours to procure and promote it : but it is impossible to do good to all ; no man's abilities can reach to the knowledge, much less to the supply and relief of the wants of all. We are therefore " to do good unto all men, while we have time," or " as we have opportunity ;" which either signifies as occasion is offered, or as we have ability : and herein it is necessary to make a difference, and to use prudence and discretion in the choice of the most fit and proper objects. Cases of extremity, the obligations of nature, of justice, of gratitude, claim a particular regard ; and especially they " who are of the household of faith," members of the same mystical body, who partake of the same holy mysteries, the body and blood of our blessed Saviour, which is the strictest bond of christian charity, fall under a very particular consideration in the exercise of this duty. But we are not therefore to confine our bounty to one particular sect or party, as if they and none else were of the household of faith ; for so did the Jews, and so do the Papists now.

The next thing recommended is an unwearied perseverance in well doing. Saint Paul in his first epistle to Timothy, after asserting his apostolic authority in the most lofty and rapturous expressions of gratitude, gives directions concerning some of the judaizing christians who attempted to enrich themselves by preaching the gospel in a dishonest manner. He thereunto subjoins the most affectionate wish of all imaginable success and happiness to

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his own converts, marking out at the same time an unerring rule of conduct ; “ do thou, o man of God, flee these things ;” and proceeding in the next place to give directions concerning such christians as were already possessed of riches : “ charge them that are rich in this world, that they be ready to give and glad to distribute, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may attain everlasting life.” The word which our translation renders “ foundation,” according to the common use of it, seems in this place to have a more easy and peculiar sense, and to signify the security that is given by a pledge, or by an instrument or obligation of contract for the performance of covenants. The apostle seems plainly to allude to that passage in the apocryphal book of Tobit iv. 8, 9. “ if thou hast abundance, give alms accordingly ; for thou layest up a good treasure for thyself,” thou treasurest up a good pledge or security, a sure deposit, “ against the day of necessity.” If moreover such as are rich in this world take into the account what the scriptures assure us, that proportionable to the degrees of their charity, kindness, and generosity, will be their reward, they will easily be persuaded to lay out their money where there is the greatest advantage and the best security. For “ God is not unrighteous, that He will forget your works and labour that proceedeth of love : to do good and to distribute forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased : give alms of thy goods, and never turn thy face from any poor man, and then the face of the Lord shall not be turned away from thee : be merciful after thy power ; if thou hast much, give plentifully ; if thou hast little, do thy diligence gladly to give of that little ; for so gatherest thou thyself a good reward in the day of necessity : he that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord ; and look, what he layeth out, it shall be paid him again : blessed be the man that provideth for the sick and needy ; the Lord shall deliver him in the time of trouble.”

“ Let us now consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works ; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves

ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." Can any thing be more important, than that we should, when we seriously meditate upon the death of Christ, who gave Himself freely a sacrifice for us, desire to express our gratitude in that way which he has chosen? that the hearts of the poor and needy being rejoiced with our bounty, may zealously join with us in sending up praises and thanksgivings to God. There is no man who approaches the Lord's table with any sense of christianity upon his mind, but must needs have a ready disposition to shew mercy. But let this be attended to, that the true christian temper and disposition of love and universal charity is greater and more excellent than the most unbounded liberality to the poor. The Apostle distinguishes between them in express words, and gives the preference to the former: "though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." And so necessary is the duty of "forbearing one another, and forgiving one another," that it is our Lord's advice; "if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift:" Matt. v. 23, 24. intimating, that so long as we bear a revengeful mind towards our brethren, God will not accept of any gift or sacrifice that we can offer Him, or indeed of any act of religious worship that we can perform. He does not make it of so much more importance than offering the gift, as that it may at any time be an excuse for neglecting this service; but this must be carefully and religiously attended to, that the gift or service is not acceptable to God without the foregoing reconciliation with men.

And "now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." 1 Cor. i. 10. Saint Paul's meaning is,

that notwithstanding all such differences of opinion as are absolutely unavoidable, yet by mutual forbearance, meekness, and charity, they should nevertheless be free from strife and contention. A principal part of the design of this whole epistle was to shew the necessity of love and unity among christians; and all that the Apostle discourses therein concerning the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was with intent to demonstrate the same thing from the nature and design of this holy institution. Hence is derived that severe censure upon those, who eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily. But let it not therefore be made a matter of scruple and groundless surmise, as if no man can be a worthy communicant, unless he is actually upon good and friendly terms with all mankind. To be so is impossible, and to pretend to be so is hypocrisy. The passions, the humours, and the prejudices of men operate so powerfully in society, and their understandings are so apt to judge according to the inclination of the will and affections, rather than the exact truth of the thing and the merits of the case, that the Apostle thought it needful to instruct Timothy, "his own son in the faith," in whom was "the gift of God," and solemnly to "charge him before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, to do nothing by partiality." 1 Tim. v. 21. So that it is well, if the consideration of the death of Christ, which we commemorate in the holy sacrament, disposes our hearts to forgive them that trespass against us, as we pray to God to forgive us our trespasses.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE IV.

THE sentences being read, or so many of them as conveniently may be, it is now a proper time to proceed to the exercise of another branch of christian charity, that of Intercession. And this is a charity, which God hath put into every man's power ; which the richest stand in need of as well as the poorest, and the poorest in the world as well as the richest are capable of exercising at all times and upon all occasions. We may be liberal and bountiful in our prayers to those, to whom we are able to give nothing else ; and when our hands cannot reach to relieve them, we may pour out our hearts to God for them ; we may pray for their spiritual and temporal good, though it be not in our power to be instrumental in procuring either. Our alms must needs be confined to a few indigent neighbours, but our intercession may be as extensive as the loving kindness of the Lord, " who comforts and succours all them who in this transitory life are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity." Nor can we at any time intercede more properly for the church of Christ, than when we commemorate His death, by virtue whereof he did once redeem us, and for ever continues to intercede for us in heaven.

For which reason the primitive christians, whenever they celebrated the holy mysteries of the body and blood of Christ, used a form of Intercession for the holy Catholic Church : their prayers were more extensive than ours, taking in the dead as well as the living : which practice was founded on some particular notions of their own ; and no exception could lie against it, if by it they meant only to testify their love and respect to the dead, to declare their belief in the communion of saints, and keep up in themselves a lively sense of the soul's immortality.

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But the fictions of vain and deceitful men were the cause of infinite superstition in the church. Upon the same foundation with that whole invention of the saints in heaven being helpful to sinners upon earth, christians have been taught to believe, that the prayers of the living might avail for the dead, instead of their having perfected true repentance and reformation in their lives.

Our Liturgy therefore rejects the petition for the faithful that are departed, and the people are called upon to pray "for the whole state of Christ's church militant here in earth." The state of a christian in this world is frequently compared to a warfare, and this allusion has appeared so just, that the character of militant has obtained as the common distinction of that part of the church of Christ sojourning here in the world, from the other part of the family which is at rest in heaven. This appellation is never more applicable than in the devout assemblies of the church for the celebration of the blessed sacrament of the Lord's Supper; when the militant church doth resemble most of all that hidden dignity and glory, wherewith the church triumphant in heaven is beautified; when good men on earth are full of faith, hope, and charity; being partakers with them who are gone before, and who have already attained to the inheritance of the saints in light; praising God for their deliverance from the miseries of this sinful world; setting before themselves their good examples, imitating their virtues, and respecting their memories; humbly supplicating the grace of God, that they may be made partakers with them of his heavenly kingdom; looking for and waiting unto the blessed hope and the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; concluding their earnest intercession to the Divine Majesty, to inspire continually the universal church with the spirit of truth, unity and concord, in the most devout accents of piety and adoration: "grant this, o Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our only mediator and advocate." And let all the people say, "Amen," so be it.

To proceed: as the former exhortations were designed to increase the number of communicants, so another is
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here added to be read at the time of the celebration of the holy communion, to make them worthy partakers ; and without this, all other preparations would be thrown away. In vain would it be that all things are ready, that themselves are come together with a purpose of communicating, and are conveniently placed for receiving the holy sacrament, if they are not meet to be partakers thereof. It is the pious concern of our Church to prepare the devout communicant for this heavenly banquet, as well as this heavenly banquet for the devout communicant. The priest therefore charitably assures them that mind to come to the holy communion, that the benefit is great, if with a true penitent heart and lively faith they receive this holy sacrament, for then we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ and drink His blood ; in allusion to those words of the Apostle, “ the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ ? ” 1 Cor. x. 16. then we dwell in Christ and Christ in us, we are one with Christ and Christ with us ; for Christ himself hath said, John vi. 65. “ he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in Me and I in him : ” on the contrary, the danger is great, if we receive the same unworthily.

Many people, I know, are very much offended at the repetition of some expressions contained in this last Exhortation, “ of being guilty of the body and blood of Christ our Saviour ; ” that is, guilty of the greatest irreverence towards him ; “ of eating and drinking our own damnation ; ” which word might more properly be translated judgment or condemnation, as it often is elsewhere, not to certain punishment in another life, but to such marks of God’s displeasure, as He sees fit, and which will be confined to this world, or extended to the next, as the case requires ; “ not considering,” or in the language of the apostle, “ not discerning the Lord’s body ; ” not distinguishing sufficiently a solemn act of religion, by a difference of behaviour from that in common life ; “ kindling God’s wrath against us, provoking Him to plague us with divers diseases and sundry kinds of death ; ” that is, as
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Saint Paul expressly interprets himself, provoking God to inflict upon us several kinds of judgments.

These indeed are hard sayings, and thousands of people, by understanding them in too strong a sense, have not dared in all their life-time, though in the main very good livers, to partake of the Lord's Supper, for fear of eating and drinking their own damnation; yet they are all of them avoided by coming worthily with faith and repentance. Dreadful as they may be, they are only so to impenitent sinners. Their condition indeed is very terrible, and so is every page in scripture against such, whether they come to the communion or not. The Church therefore asks them very sharply, "why then do ye not repent?" for so ye might come hither without danger; and truly, if they repent not, they will perish, although they stay away. If without repentance they come to the holy communion, they die because they come unworthily; or if they forbear to come and continue in sin, they die also. So that if they consider it well, God hath brought them into an happy necessity of repenting; and we do not exhort them to come in their sins, but to cast away their sins and come worthily. All this is acknowledged; but wherein particularly consists that due preparation, by which all these evils and dangers may be avoided and the benefits of receiving worthily most certainly obtained, it is very meet that the consciences of well-disposed christians should be especially instructed. The priest therefore with much earnestness and devout affection exhorts the communicants "diligently to try and examine themselves." It is the advice of the Apostle, and the only rule which the scriptures give in this case. And this examination can only be of two sorts; either an examination into the whole state of a man's mind, whether he be "in the faith" (2 Cor. xiii. 5.) and in his general conduct has made it his sincere endeavour to obey the commandments of God; or else an examination into the present disposition of his mind, whether he be at the particular time of communicating in a devout frame and temper. The former kind of examination is indeed of great importance, and attended with

no difficulty ; the latter to pious persons of melancholy dispositions is full of difficulties and scruples, but in reality of little importance. There are many who do err perhaps on the stricter hand, and are superstitious in this matter, under an apprehension of a greater necessity than there really is of a long and solemn examination and preparation of themselves, as often as they receive the sacrament ; insomuch that unless they can gain just so much time to set apart for it, they will absolutely refrain therefrom ; though they live as becometh Christians, and being habitually prepared can never be absolutely unprepared. To others who perhaps would never find time to recollect themselves and to take the condition of their souls into serious consideration, the preparation for the sacrament is so advantageous an opportunity to examine the state of their souls and to exercise repentance, that I wonder why all but the most profligate sinners do not eagerly embrace it with resolution and care.

That the Lord's Supper is open to all the professors of christianity, every man understands from the words of the institution. The holy scriptures have not particularly expressed the qualifications and dispositions that are required of them who come to the Lord's Supper : they may nevertheless easily be collected from the nature of the ordinance itself, and our Church Catechism has reduced them to these three ; repentance, faith, and charity. The solemn performance of this holy rite is a criterion of faith in the devout communicant ; it is itself an act of faith ; for men come to it to testify and declare that they do believe, not to procure that they may believe. Does any one, who doubts of the great truths of christianity, think that his scruples would be removed upon receiving the sacrament ? yet if he believes already and therefore communicates, his faith will needs be strengthened by the devout and solemn performance of this religious duty, especially if it be frequently repeated. The rule of judging is nevertheless not so much by the positiveness, as by the liveliness of our faith ; for there are many false notions of religion, which will soon carry the people into a dissolu-

tion of morals, under a pretence of being justified by faith without works : a doctrine which strikes at the root of all religion, because it weakens the obligation to a holy life. And it is exactly the same thing with respect to charity : receiving the holy communion is indeed very effectual to increase the degree of it, but the reality we must have, that is, a real and hearty disposition thereto, before we are worthy to receive. And then for repentance, which consists in a hearty sorrow for past transgressions, and a full resolution to become better. More than this we cannot do, and less than this God cannot accept : for it would be to give us a license to disobey him, if He allowed us to come to the Lord's table, and " have fellowship with Him, while we walked in darkness." Mere infirmities, the daily incursions of human frailties, will be no excuse for omitting what Christ has commanded to be done in remembrance of Him ; nor can they be any reason why we should not perform it with comfort. And thus we cannot pursue a more effectual method to obtain that full trust in God's mercy, which the communion service requires, than by receiving this holy sacrament frequently. Hence too arises the duty of self-examination. For unless a man has a true notion of the end and design of what he is going about, and of some rule of fitness thereto ; and thereupon takes a review of himself whether he be equal to it, and prepares himself accordingly ; it is plainly his opinion, that it does not signify what he is as to his character and principles, and that one man will receive just as much benefit as another : and is he not guilty of a most shameful and criminal absurdity ?

On the other hand, I must not omit to take notice of some common errors into which good people have fallen. They find the exhortation of the apostle connected with those dreadful denunciations, " whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord ;" and again, " he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself ;" and upon the mistake and misapplication of these texts they have unwarily concluded, that
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the danger of receiving unworthily being so very great, it is the safer way not to receive at all. Saint Paul indeed exaggerates, as pathetically as he could, the danger of receiving unworthily ; but what think ye ? did he mean to deter the Corinthians from receiving at all, because they had sometimes come to the Lord's table without due reverence ? or does he not rather exhort them to amend, and to come better prepared for the future ? Observe then ; after that terrible denunciation he does not add, therefore let christians take heed of coming to the sacrament ; but let them examine themselves, and so let them eat of that bread and drink of that cup.

It is hardly possible to conceive any thing of worse consequence to religion and morality, than to drive the people away from the Lord's table by the argument of unfitness and the want of due preparation, or those vain apprehensions and surmises of conscientious persons that the sins which they shall commit afterwards are unpardonable. It is surely an expedient very disgraceful to christianity and dangerous to its professors, to cut off all religion, and therewith the means whereby the sinner should be reclaimed and brought into a better state, rather than perform any part of it unworthily. Is it possible to entertain a thought so unworthy of God and our blessed Saviour, as to imagine that this holy sacrament was instituted not for the furtherance of our salvation, but to be a snare and an occasion of our ruin ; or can we think, that many good men should, because of their strict and conscientious observance of our Lord's Institution, unavoidably fall into condemnation ?

It will moreover be of singular use in regulating the practice of self-examination, which like other religious exercises of piety has sometimes been directed to wrong ends, and like them too been productive of much spiritual pride, when they who have passed this examination with much satisfaction to themselves, and a confident opinion that they have gone through what others have not been able to go through, and consequently must be much better christians than they ; it will, I say, be of great use

to consider the occasion and circumstances of the Apostle's discourse to the Corinthians. It seems, he took it for granted that they were resolved to continue and persevere in their christian profession ; and their crime was an irreverend and disorderly participation of the holy sacrament. It is plain then, that he did not intend to speak of any habitual preparation by repentance for sins past or the resolution of a good life, but only of their actual fitness and worthiness at that time when they came to receive the Lord's Supper. Agreeably thereto we are to understand the apostle's precept of self-examination ; wherein much is to be left to every man's prudence and serious consideration concerning his own state and condition, and the circumstances of his particular case ; or let him repair to some discreet Minister of God's word, who will explain to him the real import of the Apostle's discourse, which is the cause of so many perplexities ; together with the great advantages of self-examination when we are meditating upon the holy sacrament, which requires rather resolution and care, than any long time of preparation. And without doubt, when we consider well what a sacred action we are going about, and what a devout temper of mind is most becoming us, when we do this in remembrance of our blessed Lord and Saviour, it will appear to be a practice very worthy of the countenance and encouragement of all good men ; because it is of great use for christians by way of preparation for the holy communion, to examine themselves in a much larger sense than the apostle occasionally intended, in order to a sincere repentance and amendment of all our several errors and miscarriages, and to make us more careful for the future to avoid such, for which we have so lately and severely censured and condemned ourselves. To which purpose we are earnestly exhorted in the publick Office of the Church, " to repent us truly of our past sins, to amend our lives, and to be in perfect charity with all men ; for shall we be meet partakers of those holy mysteries."

And thus it is, this excellent form of exhortation is very well suited as well to warn the unworthy not to approach
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the Lord's table, as to assure sincere and devout christians, that their communion is acceptable and their preparation good, notwithstanding the slowness and indisposition of some, their want of warmth and affection, the troublesome and uneasy, or even the irreligious thoughts and suggestions, with which many good and pious souls are apt to be disturbed, but which by no means unqualify them for the performance of this solemn duty and service. Consider well the nature and end of this institution; that it is acknowledged by christians of all denominations (except perhaps one only sect) to be the express and positive commandment of our Lord Himself: reflect too, that every indisposition towards it, of what kind soever, may be inflicted by God as a just punishment of a former superstitious disuse in some, or a careless neglect and scornful inattention of others. Let this sink deeply into your breasts, that he who is unfit to approach the Lord's table, is unfit to join himself in the assemblies of the saints, is moreover unworthy of the name and profession of a christian. How few are there whose scruples concerning their own unworthiness are founded upon the considerations of true religion? yet be ye well assured, after all that can be said or done, the best livers are the best prepared for the holy communion.

In them verily the due effect of every part of self-examination is exemplified, to wit, a true and sincere repentance, a lively faith, and an universal charity. And well may the great duty of thanksgiving be recommended to such; well may they say with the Psalmist, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all the benefits that he has done unto me? I will receive the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. Praise the Lord, o my soul; and all that is within me, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, o my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thy sins, and healeth all thine infirmities; who saveth thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with mercy and loving kindness." Well may they be exhorted above all things to "give most humble and hearty thanks to God the Father, the Son, and

and the Holy Ghost, for the redemption of the world by the death and passion of our Saviour Christ, both God and man, who did humble himself even to the death upon the cross for us miserable sinners, who lay in darkness and the shadow of death, that He might make us the children of God and exalt us to everlasting life." Well may they be reminded of "the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour Jesus Christ thus dying for us, and the innumerable benefits which by his precious bloodshedding He hath obtained to us;" which that we may always remember "He hath instituted and ordained holy mysteries as pledges of his love, and for a continual remembrance of his death, to our great and endless comfort. To Him therefore with the Father and the Holy Ghost let us give, as we are most bounden, continual thanks, submitting ourselves wholly to his holy will and pleasure, and studying to serve Him in true holiness and righteousness all the days of our life." Amen.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE V.

THE feast being ready and the guests prepared, the priest invites them to draw near with faith, without which their approaches to the holy table would avail them nothing, and to take this holy sacrament to their comfort: and it is a matter of very great moment, that we are graciously informed in the gospel, by what means and upon what terms we may be reconciled to God and find mercy with Him.

Confession of our sins is an essential part of that great and necessary duty of repentance, without which a sinner cannot have any reasonable hopes of the mercy and favour of God. Nor is a general confession, that we are sinners, sufficient; there must be a particular acknowledgment of our sins, so far as upon a full discussion and examination of our consciences we can call them to remembrance; especially such heinous offences as our consciences will not suffer us to forget, must be carefully adverted to with the aggravations of them; and this confession must be made to God with such a shame and sorrow as will produce a sincere resolution to forsake them. To God, I say; because the confession of our sins to men is not, generally speaking, a condition of forgiveness; but only in some particular cases, when sins against God are complicated with scandal and injury to men.

With respect to the confession of sins to the Priest, which is a great point of difference between Protestants and the Church of Rome, the latter esteeming it a necessary article of faith, there is less difficulty. The text upon which they ground the necessity of confession to the priest, is this: John xx. 23. "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained." They urge, that the Apostles and their successors by this power of remitting and re-
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taining sins are constituted judges of the case of penitents ; and because they cannot judge without hearing the case, that this infers particular confession of sins to the priest ; whence they conclude it necessary to the forgiveness of sins. But do not the Ministers of the gospel exercise this power of remitting sins in baptism, as well as in the administration of the other sacrament of the Lord's Supper ? and yet the particular confession of sins to the priest is not required, no not in the Church of Rome, in the baptism of adult persons.

There are many cases indeed, wherein men under the guilt and trouble of their sins can neither appease their own minds, nor sufficiently direct themselves, without recourse to some pious and discreet guide. Herein men certainly do very well, and many times prevent a great deal of disquietude to themselves, by a timely discovery of their condition to some faithful minister, without whose direction and assistance they shall never be able to extricate themselves from the perplexity of their own minds ; but by smothering their trouble in their breasts, may proceed from one degree of melancholy to another, till at last they be plunged in distraction and despair. And thus far confession is not only allowed, but encouraged among Protestants : and the same is the sense of our own Church, making all the good use of it, without the ill effects and grievous consequences of the Romish confession ; laying no necessity upon men in this matter, but advising, especially before the Lord's Supper, those who have any uneasiness upon their consciences, to apply to some discreet and faithful minister of God's word for advice and satisfaction. And since the death of Christ is commemorated therein, great reason there is that we should at that time confess our sins to God, for which he died : since there is but one proper sacrifice under the gospel, that of Christ upon the cross ; but one Mediator in heaven, to offer up our prayers to God and to intercede continually for us, in the power and virtue of that one sacrifice once offered for the redemption of mankind : since we believe, that through the merits of His death and sufferings who instituted

tuted these mysteries in remembrance thereof; and that upon the account of the satisfaction which He made to divine justice, we are restored to the favour of God, and our sins are pardoned, and we have a title to eternal life: on all these accounts, it most highly becometh us before communicating to acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, to the honour and glory of His name who so freely forgives them through Jesus Christ our Lord. Accordingly a general confession is here subjoined in our liturgy, to be made in the name of all that are minded to receive the holy communion, the minister and the people kneeling humbly upon their knees: a devout and solemn form of words, so apposite and pathetic, that if the repentance of the congregation be answerable thereto, it is impossible any should be more hearty and sincere.

We know that confession and absolution in the church of Rome give a degree of quiet and content, of joy and peace within, which the clergy of the Protestant church do not pretend to, where these things are said to be ministerial only and not authoritative; yet since the absolution of the priest is highly expedient for the comfort and support of the penitent, can he at any time exercise "the ministry of reconciliation which is given him" (2 Cor. v. 19) more seasonably than now? for which reason, standing up and turning himself to the people, he pronounces a declaratory and petitionary form of absolution. Which form the congregation must not even mentally repeat with him, much less mutter it over aloud, and thereby disturb those who are placed near them; but attend to it as delivered by the minister with an awful silence, and at the end fervently say "Amen:" which is a solemn asseveration used in scripture upon serious and important occasions, to express an earnest and hearty concurrence in what is promised, wished, or affirmed.

Absolution, in the judgment of our church, does not produce any certain effect, nor is it necessary to the forgiveness and salvation of the penitent; wherefore a formal absolution is not given to the dying penitent, unless he humbly and heartily desires it. The priest has not any

judicial power or authority to apply God's pardon or forgiveness directly to the conscience of any particular man, or the benefit of it to whom he pleases; but when he does by virtue of the power committed unto him, declare and pronounce such absolution regularly in the congregation, they who do truly and earnestly repent of their sins have most assuredly their pardon conveyed to them thereby. And herein we obviate the superstition of the papists, who fondly imagine that after a course of a most flagitious life the sinner may be reconciled to God, and have his sins forgiven at the last gasp, upon a confession of them to the priest with an imperfect degree of contrition, together with his absolution; and moreover their vain reliance upon a power in him of repeating continually certain regular and periodical absolutions, than which there cannot be a greater encouragement to vices and immoralities of all kinds.

After all, that no doubts or unreasonable fears and apprehensions may remain on their minds, who commemorate the death of Christ in His blessed sacrament, our liturgy has subjoined to this part of the service several sentences of scripture containing the gospel promises of life and salvation: which being moreover the same texts whereon the foregoing absolution is founded, are admirably fitted to confirm the faith and repentance of the devout communicant; and if duly considered, will refresh the wearied spirit, will administer sweet comfort and relief to the broken and contrite heart, will satisfy the fearful soul, and utterly dispel sorrow and despair.

If any then doubt of the pardon and forgiveness of their sins upon true faith and repentance, let them hear what comfortable words our Saviour Christ saith unto all that truly turn to Him: "Come unto Me all that travel and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." S. Matt. xi. 28. Come to me as disciples to be taught by me, in order to which it is requisite, that ye believe me to be the promised Messiah and Saviour of the world, who will give himself for you, that he may redeem you from all iniquity.

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“ So God loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.” S. John iii. 16.

If your fears suggest to any of you, that though all this is true, yet ye are unworthy, because ye are grievous sinners; hear also what Saint Paul saith, 1 Tim. i. 15.

“ This is a true saying and worthy of all men to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

Or if any of you have doubts nevertheless whether God will be appeased; hear also what Saint John saith, 1 John ii. 1.

“ If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins.” The efficacy of Christ’s mediation and intercession with the Father is frequently mentioned in scripture together with the expiation which He made for the sins of men; or which is the same thing, with the price which He paid for the redemption of mankind; because the one is founded in the other, and depends upon it.

The devout congregation having thus exercised their charity, repentance, and faith, and being in a right disposition to lift up their hearts unto the Lord, the next part of the office is thanksgiving. It was a precept in the law of Moses (Deut. xvi. 19) “ Thou shalt rejoice in thy feasts before the Lord:” and particularly in the paschal supper, besides the usual form of blessing and thanksgiving, they sang a solemn hymn in memory of their deliverance out of the land of Egypt. In compliance with which custom, we find it recorded by two of the evangelists, that our Saviour and His disciples immediately after the institution of the Lord’s Supper sang an hymn of praise unto God; which has been supposed to be the same, or part of that hymn, which the Jews used to sing after the paschal supper: their deliverance from the Egyptian bondage being a type of our deliverance from the power and dominion of sin, and the thanksgiving proper upon that occasion being more emphatically applicable to this. Besides; in the Institution itself, the Evangelist takes notice that when our

Saviour took the bread, He gave thanks, or blessed and praised God ; whence the whole action is usually called the Eucharist or solemn Thanksgiving : and to do this in remembrance of Christ implies, that with the greatest joy and highest expressions of gratitude we return thanks to God for His unspeakable mercy in giving His only begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. And as it is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times and in all places join with the heavenly choir in praises and adorations, it is more particularly so, when “ we do this in remembrance of Him ;” shewing forth the Lord’s death by a perpetual commemoration, until His second coming ; and chiefly when we celebrate the principal acts of our redemption, the nativity, the resurrection, and ascension of our Saviour, and his sending the Holy Ghost to comfort us. “ Therefore with Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious name, evermore praising thee, and saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts, heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Glory be to Thee, o Lord most High. Amen.”

The nearer we approach to the Lord’s table, the greater reverence we ought to express. Certain it is, those decent preparations for the most solemn work of devotion will compose the wandering mind, and the grace of God will sanctify such sensible inferiour helps to greater and higher purposes. “ Thy way, o God, is in the sanctuary ;” (Ps. lxxvii. 13) whereby holy David expresses those raptures and transports of affection, which he was accustomed to have in the fixed and solemn times and places of God’s worship : we must needs approach with reverence to such sacred places ; and where there are affections of reverence, there will needs be postures of reverence too. And though God’s peculiar presence in the assemblies of his saints may give us confidence in our addresses to Him there, yet since it is out of God’s mere goodness and grace, that we have the divine privilege of coming to the Lord’s table, it is our duty to acknowledge it to be so : our confidence

fidence must be tempered with an act of humility, which the priest kneeling down offers up in the name of all them that receive the holy communion, expressing his own and the people's unworthiness. "We do not presume to come to this thy table, o Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in Thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under Thy table." Yet of whom shall we have confidence to obtain mercy, but of Him whose property it is always to have mercy?

Next follows the prayer of Consecration, which is a most ancient part of the communion-office. The Evangelist Saint Matthew in the account which he gives of the institution of the holy supper, and Saint Paul who delivered to his new converts that which he had received of the Lord concerning it, declare, that our Saviour himself did not distribute the bread and wine without using "a form of blessing" over it, Matt. xxvi. 26. which the latter calls "giving thanks," 1 Cor. xi. 24. The celebration of the passover among the Jews was plainly the eating of a meal distinguished from ordinary meals by several peculiar ceremonies. Two of these ceremonies were eating of bread solemnly broken, and drinking a cup of wine called the cup of blessing. Our Saviour transferred them into the christian church, to be used for a commemoration of his death and sufferings. The holy rite is very plain and significant. We read in the book of Samuel (I. xix. 13) that the people would not eat till he came, because he did bless the sacrifice; and afterwards they eat that were bidden. How much more becoming are the prayers of the priest and the people over this heavenly food of the soul, before we eat it!

Observe now with what propriety, after the example of all the churches in the world from the days of the apostles, the Church of England uses such a form; setting aside many superstitious and corrupt additions, retaining the words themselves of our blessed Saviour's holy institution, together with an introductory address to Almighty God, our heavenly Father. If our Saviour had any other purpose

purpose in the Institution than what the words imply, He would certainly have declared it at that time. He has commanded us only to do what He did. Many formalities and ceremonial circumstances have by long use produced in the minds of men a conceit, that they are essential parts of that, to which indeed they are but appendages; but his words sufficiently express his meaning, which without them would not have been sufficiently known. That they were used by our Saviour to work any thing upon the bread and wine, cannot possibly be deduced from scripture or reason, and yet a great part of the popish superstition took its rise from an ungrounded opinion of the force of the words themselves.

Thus it is, we most humbly implore the mercy of God to grant, that “ we receiving these his creatures of bread and wine, according to His Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ’s holy institution, in remembrance of His death and passion, may be partakers of His most blessed body and blood.” The priest by taking the bread into his hand and breaking it, makes a memorial of our blessed Saviour’s body broken upon the cross; and by exhibiting the wine, of His blood which was shed for the sins of the whole world; and by laying his hands upon each of them, repeating the very words of the institution itself, he declares, that the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, besides expressing on our part duty to God, expresses on his part grace and favour towards us: that the bread and wine is an outward and visible sign, the solemn application thereof to a meaning and purpose which in their own nature they could not have: that this outward and visible sign denotes an inward and spiritual grace given unto us; that is, some favour freely bestowed upon us, by which our inward and spiritual condition, the state of our souls is much better: that the whole was ordained by Christ, and is of perpetual obligation: that it therefore truly deserves the name of a sacrament; because it is not only a sign of grace, an action which represents the benefits that it derives to us, but likewise the means whereby we receive the same; not the means whereby we merit grace, for nothing

thing but the sufferings of our blessed Saviour can do that for us, but the means whereby what he hath merited is conveyed to us: that it is moreover a pledge to assure us thereof. God has graciously been pleased to add to his covenant the solemnity of certain outward performances, by which He declares to us, that as surely as our bodies are nourished by bread broken and wine poured out and received, so surely are our souls strengthened and refreshed by the body and blood of Christ. And thus, as the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was ordained for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, so the solemnity of certain religious actions accompanying it, performed by God's ministers in pursuance of the divine appointment, is an earnest or pledge of the benefits which we receive thereby.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE VI.

WE come now to the Form of Administration: and herein it is ordained, “ that the communicants shall receive the same kneeling ; which order is well meant, for a signification of our humble and grateful acknowledgment of the benefits of Christ therein given to all worthy receivers, and for the avoiding of such profanation, and disorder in the holy communion, as might otherwise ensue. Yet lest the same kneeling should by any persons, either out of ignorance and infirmity, or out of malice and obstinacy, be misconstrued and depraved, it is here declared, that thereby no adoration is intended, or ought to be done, either unto the sacramental bread and wine there bodily received, or unto any corporal presence of Christ’s natural flesh and blood. For the sacramental bread and wine remain still in their very natural substances, and therefore may not be adored ; for that were idolatry, to be abhorred of all faithful Christians ; and the natural body and blood of our Saviour Christ are in heaven and not here ; it being against the truth of Christ’s natural body, to be at one time in more places than one.”

This declaration explaining the reason of kneeling at the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, which had been in K. Edward’s Liturgy but was left out in Q. Elizabeth’s time, was very properly restored ; because it contains an express decision against the real presence of Christ in this sacrament, and marks very strongly the essential difference between a speculation of a mode of Christ’s presence when it rests in opinion, and an adoration founded thereon. Though the opinion of such a presence is wrong, yet there would be no great harm in that alone, if it had not a direct tendency to the impious and abominable doctrine of Transubstantiation ; but the adoration of an undue object is idolatry,

Idolatry, and has all the impiety of that abominable doctrine.

We therefore kneel at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, not to acknowledge any corporal presence, adding thereby idolatrous practice to erroneous belief, but to worship Him who is every where present, the Invisible God. And this posture of kneeling we by no means look upon as essential in itself ; but as a very becoming appointment, and very fit to accompany the prayers and praises which we offer up to the throne of grace at the time of receiving the holy communion ; as well as to express that inward spirit of piety and humility, on which our partaking worthily of this holy ordinance, and receiving benefit therefrom, do so much depend.

And here let it be observed once for all, that ritual matters, such as kneeling at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and the sign of the cross in baptism, are in their own nature indifferent, and have always been declared so to be : all their necessity arises only from the power that has enacted them. It is a strange position, that it is not lawful to impose things indifferent : it strikes at all authority both in church and state ; since they seem to be the only matters in which human authority can interpose, and which may at any time, when it shall be thought expedient, be left as indifferent in their practice as they are in their nature.

The words of Administration are a full paraphrase of Christ's own words at the institution, and the whole form together is as suitable to the occasion as can be contrived. And here it will be proper to shew in the first place, that the Lord's Supper is rightly said to be ordained for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, not a repetition thereof as the Church of Rome teacheth. Every act both of worship and obedience is in some sense a sacrifice to God, humbly offered up to him for his acceptance. And this sacrament in particular being a memorial and representation of the sacrifice of Christ, solemnly and religiously made, may well enough be called, in a figurative way of speaking, by the same Name with

what it commemorates and represents. But that He should be really and literally offered up in it, is a direct contradiction not only to common sense, but also to the holy scriptures; which expressly say, "He was not to be offered often, for then He must often have suffered; but hath appeared once to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; and after that, for ever sat down on the right hand of God: for by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Hebrews 9 & 10.

Our Lord's command is, "do this in remembrance of Me." Now in the nature of things, the remembrance of any thing is not the repetition of the thing itself. And such a repeated offering up continually of the real and substantial body and blood of Christ; if any such thing could be, would not be to commemorate the sacrifice once offered upon the cross, but to obliterate the memory of it by offering up perpetually new ones. The sacramental remembrance of the great propitiation, the ancient writers of the church do indeed frequently style figuratively the unbloody sacrifice; yet by that very expression it is declared not to be properly itself a sacrifice, but only a grateful commemoration of one; and all the arguments drawn by the church of Rome from those figurative expressions, by which the elements are called Christ's body and blood, and the sacrament itself a sacrifice, are as absurd and contrary to common sense, as their practice of worshipping a morsel of bread for God is idolatrous and abominable; and it is all of a piece, to teach that the elements are changed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ, and that the sacrament is properly a continual repetition of that expiatory sacrifice once offered upon the cross.

To them who truly and sincerely repent and amend, and who humbly and devoutly beg of God the pardon of their past and forsaken sins, through the intercession of Christ, though there is indeed no new Sacrifice, no new foundation of remission, there is nevertheless sufficient ground for hope and assurance of pardon in the merit of that one all-sufficient sacrifice once offered for ever; that "one oblation

tion of himself once offered," as it is very copiously and elegantly expressed in the communion service; in allusion to that portion of scripture in the epistle to the Hebrews (ch. 10.) where the one oblation of Christ is opposed to the many kinds of sacrifices under the law, and the once offered to the repetition of those sacrifices. Sincere penitents can never with more reasonable and well-grounded faith, hope that the benefits of the grace and forgiveness once purchased for them by that great expiation will be applied to themselves; that so the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ may preserve their bodies and souls unto everlasting life; than when they commemorate their Saviour's sufferings in that solemn manner, which He himself hath appointed, with true devotion and with full purpose of amendment of life. What an indignity is it then to the holy institution, that any who call themselves christians should neglect this ordinance with a careless indifference! what an injury to their own souls, if upon any slight pretences they deprive themselves of the exceeding great benefits of so reasonable and necessary a duty!

The next observation I shall make upon the form of administration is this. The ordinance, as has been shewn, was appointed not to repeat, but to commemorate the sacrifice of Christ; which though we are required to do, and do accordingly more or less explicitly in all our acts of devotion, yet we are not required to do it by any visible representation, except in the Lord's Supper; of which the outward part or sign is bread and wine, which the Lord hath commanded to be received. And indeed he has so clearly commanded them both to be received equally by all the professors of His most holy religion, that no reasonable plea can be made either for them who omit this sacrament entirely, or for that unjustifiable innovation in the church of Rome which with-holds the cup from the people. Saint Paul, in the plainest words that can be used, declares it to be the duty of the people to partake in both kinds; "as oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come:" and our

Saviour's command to His disciples was, " drink ye all of this," as well as take, eat, this is my body ; and herein He hath more expressly directed all to drink of the one, than to eat of the other. They urge, that the Apostles, whom our Saviour commanded to drink this, were priests, and none of them laymen ; yet their church forbids the priests themselves to receive it, excepting those who perform the service ; and moreover the appointment of receiving the cup belongs evidently to the same persons, to whom He administered the bread ; and by the same reason that the people are denied the cup, they may be denied the bread also, or to partake of this holy sacrament at all : which is the highest impiety. But then we also of the reformed church ought always to be put in mind, that tho' we are allowed to communicate in both kinds, yet we may still lose the advantages of both, if the holiness of our lives be not conformable to what is required of them who come to the Lord's Supper ; to wit, " to examine themselves whether they repent them truly of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life ; to have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of His death, and to be in charity with all men."

Thirdly ; there is no mystery, no obscurity, in the form of Administration ; every thing is plain and intelligible. But the church of Rome instead of saying, that the bread and wine are signs of the body and blood of Christ, insist on it, that they are turned into the very substance of His real body and blood : which imagined change they therefore call transubstantiation : and it is amazing how easily they are prepared to swallow this doctrine against the clear evidence of their senses. Now if this was true, there would be no outward sign left ; for they say it is converted into the thing signified : and consequently there would be no sacrament, for a sacrament is an outward sign of an inward grace. Besides, if our senses can inform us what any thing is, we have their testimony that the bread and wine continue to be bread and wine as much after consecration, as they were before. Yet it is confidently urged, that Jesus Christ having expressly said of the bread in the holy
sacra-

sacrament, " this is my body," we ought to believe the said piece of bread to be really and substantially His body, how much soever we may apprehend it to contradict the principles of sense and reason. Their whole argument is very pompous : that the Infallibility of the church has defined it to be so ; that miracles and visions have abundantly supported it ; that the infinite power of God, the words of the institution itself, the testament of our dying Saviour, all of them confirm it. Now the words here alleged are confessedly in the holy scriptures ; they were pronounced by our Lord Himself, and addressed to the apostles ; but it is incumbent upon them who argue for the letter of these words to prove, if they can, that the figurative sense ought to be exploded and set aside ; till then we will not admit the literal meaning in contradiction to all our senses and ideas of things, which rise up so strongly against every part of their chain of wonders. And though we easily apprehend that an infinite power can both create and annihilate beings at pleasure, yet we maintain that God cannot change the essence of things, and so make them contrary to their own nature. Besides, when our Saviour said " this is my body which is broken, and this is my blood which is shed," how is it possible that He could mean it literally ? for this plain reason, because His body was not then broken nor his blood shed ; nor is either of them in that condition now ; and therefore the bread and wine neither could then, nor can now, be turned into them as such. Our Saviour says in another place (Saint John ch. 6.) that He is " the bread of life," that his " flesh is meat indeed" and his " blood is drink indeed ;" that " who so eateth " the one and " drinketh " the other, hath eternal life ; and that without it we have no life in us : but all this if understood literally would prove, not that the bread in the sacrament was turned into his flesh, but that his flesh was turned into bread. It is therefore so to be understood, as indeed our Saviour himself gives notice : " the flesh profiteth nothing ;" the words which I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." John vi. 63. It is not the gross and literal, but the

the figurative and spiritual eating and drinking ; the partaking by a lively faith of an union with Christ, and being inwardly nourished by the fruits of his offering up his flesh and blood for us, that alone can be of benefit to the soul. And in this sense the body and blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper : though all communicants partake equally of what Christ calls His body and blood, that is, the outward signs of them, yet in a much more important sense, the faithful only, the pious and worthy receiver, eateth his flesh and drinketh his blood ; which are verily and indeed, in their beneficial effects, taken and received by none else : to the faithful only it is the strengthening and refreshing of their souls by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by bread and wine. This real presence of Christ in the sacrament His church has always maintained ; but as soon as the monstrous notion of his corporal presence was started, because it seemed to exalt and dignify so much the holy sacrament, it easily spread and prevailed in an ignorant and superstitious age ; till at last idolatrous practice was added to erroneous belief, and a morsel of bread was worshipped and adored for the Son of God Himself.

I have insisted more largely upon these points, because I verily believe, and would not, brethren, ye should be ignorant, that many doctrines of the Romanists have not only given occasion to infidelity by the monstrous absurdities which have thereby been brought into religion, and by overstraining the faith of men in some parts of it have brought them to a disbelief of the whole, being apt to think that the miracles of the Apostles might have been of the same nature with their lying wonders ; but besides this, in order to gain men to a dependance upon and submission to the infallibility of their church, they have in their writings undermined the foundations of all religion and industriously endeavoured to bring the people to scepticism and infidelity ; hoping that when they have made them of no religion, they will be fit for the religion of the church

church of Rome, which in some respects is worse than no religion at all.

The holy rite being now finished, the priest and the people after a convenient interval for their private ejaculations, wherein take great heed that they be the effusions of a serious and rational devotion, and which moreover is piously intended to compose both their bodies and their minds, and to bring them again into the proper temper of publick prayer, return to such joint devotions as are suitable to the solemnity. The first of these is the Lord's prayer, a form seasonable at all times, but peculiarly so now ; for we know, that to " as many as receive Christ," that is, believe Him to be the promised Messiah and Saviour of the world, He gives power to become the Sons of God : " John i. 12. so that we may all with one heart and with one voice address ourselves cheerfully to God, and very properly call Him " our Father." Elsewhere the people are directed to repeat the Lord's prayer with the Minister, in this place they are directed to repeat it after him ; and this they may very well do, though with respect to the whole form they repeat it together with him : the only difference is, that the expression of the latter rubrick is calculated to stir up more effectually, on this solemn occasion, the devout attention of the congregation to that comprehensive form of prayer which Christ himself has taught us. And the doxology, which is a form of giving glory to God, is here annexed, because all these devotions are designed to be an act of praise and thanksgiving for the benefits received in the holy Communion.

In the next place more especial supplications are poured forth, consisting either of vows and resolutions, such as are most proper to be used when we would express our love and duty, agreeably to the directions of the Apostle, by " presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, as our reasonable service ;" seeing that the gospel without any addition of legal performances is the only way to salvation ; or else of praises and thanksgivings, for the opportunity vouchsafed unto us of commemorating

memorating the death of Christ in the manner which He hath appointed, and which is a profession of our communion one with another, as says the same Apostle. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? for we being many are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." 1 Cor. x. 16, 17. And to this the nature and constitution of the universal Church of Christ, the notion of its being a body whereof Christ is the Head, does itself naturally lead and direct us: for as in the literal sense we have many members in one body, so in the spiritual sense we being many are one body in Christ and every one members one of another.

To conclude this office with a hymn is so direct an imitation of our Saviour's practice, (S. Matthew xxvi. 30) that frequent forms of praise and thanksgiving upon this occasion are to be met with in the most ancient christian writers; but none more earnest and affectionate, more heavenly and sublime than that which we make use of.

"Glory be to God on high, and in earth peace, goodwill towards men. We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee for thy great glory, o Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty."

"O Lord, the only begotten Son Jesu Christ; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer. Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us."

"For thou only art holy, thou only art the Lord, thou only, o Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father, Amen."

Lest any thing should still be wanting in this excellent office, the Church has added several collects more; which are all of them devout, plain, short, yet comprehensive; and are to be said as often as occasion shall serve, after the collects either of morning or evening prayer, the communion

munion or litany, particularly after the offertory when there is no communion, at the discretion of the Minister. Nothing now remains, but that all be dismissed with a solemn blessing, which will certainly abide with every worthy partaker of the holy communion. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord : and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you, and remain with you always. Amen.

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

Page 6, line 37, for *and* read *for*.

Page 12, line 38, for *length* read *lengths*.

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